

Senate Resolution 435

By: Senators Robertson of the 29th, Hufstetler of the 52nd, Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Watson of the 1st

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Urging the State of Georgia to increase its cigarette excise tax to offset indigent health care
- 2 costs; and for other purposes.

- 3 WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Georgia spends
- 4 over \$500 million per year treating cigarette-related diseases through our Medicaid program
- 5 alone; and

- 6 WHEREAS, our cigarette tax only brings in about half of that amount per year; and

- 7 WHEREAS, we should run Georgia more like a business, and no business could succeed
- 8 with such a deficit in any category; and

- 9 WHEREAS, the use of e-cigarettes and vaping is on the rise, especially with teenagers; and

- 10 WHEREAS, vaping tobacco often includes flavored products such as lime, grape, and mint
- 11 flavor; and

- 12 WHEREAS, there is no excise tax on electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) or
- 13 e-cigarettes, as they are a new product not yet defined in Georgia code; and

- 14 WHEREAS, ENDS and all vaping systems should be treated equitably with conventional
- 15 cigarettes; and

- 16 WHEREAS, Georgia has the second lowest cigarette excise tax in the United States at just
- 17 37 cents per pack; and

- 18 WHEREAS, one of our border states, Florida, has a \$1.33 cent per pack cigarette tax and still
- 19 ranks as thirty-first lowest; and

20 WHEREAS, bringing Georgia's cigarette tax just to the national average of \$1.79 per pack
21 would generate over \$500 million per year in new revenue, according to a fiscal note drafted
22 this year in Georgia; and

23 WHEREAS, this fiscal note already accounts for smokers quitting, cross-border sales, and
24 black market sales that may result from an increase; and

25 WHEREAS, eighty-nine percent of current smokers started smoking before the age of 18,
26 confirming that adults don't start smoking: kids do; and

27 WHEREAS, Georgia has not raised its cigarette tax in 16 years, but 47 states have raised
28 their cigarette taxes a collective 136 times just since we last raised Georgia's cigarette tax;

29 WHEREAS, only 18 percent of Georgians smoke cigarettes, so a cigarette tax increase is
30 really only a user fee that will have no impact on 82 percent of the population; and

31 WHEREAS, the revenue from a cigarette tax increase should be reinvested directly into our
32 state-wide health care delivery system to expand health care access, support rural hospitals
33 and providers, rebuild the health care infrastructure, and stabilize a Medicaid system that is
34 heavily burdened by tobacco-related costs; and

35 WHEREAS, the cigarette industry spends more in annual advertising for cigarettes in
36 Georgia, \$347 million, than Georgia brings in with our cigarette tax, at less than \$250
37 million; and

38 WHEREAS, in Georgia, 4200 youths under the age of 18 begin smoking every day; and

39 WHEREAS, of all cancer deaths in Georgia, 29.2 percent are attributable to smoking; and

40 WHEREAS, the Constitution of Georgia requires that all new revenue bills must originate
41 in the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives.

42 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
43 urge the House of Representatives to send the Senate a bill that increases Georgia's cigarette
44 tax to at least the national average, so that the members of the Senate can debate and consider
45 a tax increase to offset indigent health care costs.

46 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of Senate is authorized and directed to
47 make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the public and the
48 press.